

A Proposed Plan Towards Total Well-Being

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Introduction

I have read a social based article earlier regarding how the social environment is important for society or individuals as an active and integral part of human life. This means our behaviours, thoughts, emotions, social interactions, goals, and developments are always influenced by our social environments (*Social Environment - the Behavioral Scientist*, n.d.). When I look back to my self's past life times, it was full of uncomfortable environments where I was formed. It sometimes even makes it hard to find the term "Well-being" in my life's dictionary. Additionally, this paper will continually explore the environments where I was formed, the things that I was influenced by as well as my hope and longing for total well-being. As long as I mentioned this, I will be generally listing concrete plans for my proposed plan toward total well-being to empower my physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, and even financial realms as years plan.

A Barrier to Total Well-Being

A recent week earlier, I was so privileged to have an opportunity given by a professor from ATS to share about Myanmar's crisis in a zoom dialogue meeting under the topic "Intercultural Mission" with a few missionaries from the US, Philippine, and Africa. The professor gave me 15 minutes to lead interaction discussions regarding the challenges facing among Christians or ethnicities of Myanmar in the midst of Buddhists and Burmese (majority people in Myanmar) dominations based on Lightyear's Article "Being Human: The Politics of Identity". Through this discussion, I came to re-evaluate myself and I came to realize how I was Formed and what kind of forces are trying to shape my current "self" subsequently. Here my reason for why I am going to mention about "A barrier

before total well-being" is to illuminate the social environment full of inequality and injustice that I was imposed in creating my bias and encouraged to have well-organised plans for my total well-being so far.

A society is always fundamentally constructed with social, political, educational, and economical realms of communities. Unfortunately, as a minority citizen from Myanmar, I have never experienced total well-being before, under the marginalized and exclusive society especially in Education, Economic, and social opportunities. Below, I will be exploring how I have lost opportunities in such realms.

Myanmar has experienced three times military dictatorship in 1962, 1988, and 2021 since 70 years after independence from the British. Consequently, the country's education system has been heavily shaped by over 60 years of military rule, resulting in a centralised, underfunded and dilapidated system that failed to meet the needs of the Myanmar citizens (Adam Simson & Nicholas Farrelly, 2023, p. 207). It is quite confusing to discuss the policy of the military of Myanmar from history to status quo. If my observation is not mistaken, the military has been making a crazy systematic ideology for trying to wipe out all the minorities from the nation to establish a new society based on burmese way, burmese language, burmese influence, and buddhism. For this aggressive ideology, education of the nation by which they can easily install all their ideology in the mindsets of the students after finishing their brainwashing process through the education system, education came to become a basic target. The Burmese way of socialism affected education in a number of ways. For example, Burmese was made the language of instruction for all ethnic groups, Buddhism was made the state religion, and textbooks glorified a Bamar, Buddhist national identity. Burmanisation became the hallmark of post-1962 education. Subsequently, the marginalization and exclusion upon minorities has

followed as long as this system came to active. I couldn't hold much expectations for opportunities just because I am a Kachin or Christian. I cannot have any opportunity for higher education until I change my race and religion in my ID or I accept their one sided ideology. The same situation is happening in politics, social, economies and religion. These marginalizations or exclusiveness versus privilege opportunity among the Myanmar societies always strongly dominates my bias that is a huge barrier in the journey of my total well-being. This is an evaluation of my life and experiences which make difficulties in the journey to Total Well-Being.

I grew up in a big family with 12 siblings and was full of poverty. Because of the financial problems of this huge family, the word satisfaction has never come to me. I have 9 sisters and 3 brothers. The oldest sister is even heading to 45 and as I have a lot of older sisters I was being strongly influenced by my sisters rather than brothers and others. Subsequently, I grew up in a limited space full of rules, disciplines, and forces made by sisters without any personal free choice. I was grown up in a Christian family but, honestly, I have never encountered God before under the forced religious disciplines. This means I was forced to be a christian at all times since I was young. Most of my life times used to immerse in school times and study, but not in physical sports and social connections with others. As a consequence, my life is like a rough surface where I can't walk peacefully with a lot of anxieties, worries, guilt, and forces. However, I am very grateful that God has given me a special opportunity to engage him in my life under thousands of struggles and challenges; under the government's marginalized system, under influences of sisters, and under several barriers to journey to him. God gives me discipline not only for my physical or mentally but also spiritually through life experiences as well as this spiritual formation class to align my rough surface so that I can experience Total Well-Being.

Plans for Journey to Total Well-Being

As I have mentioned above, for this alignment of my rough life, It is clear that I need more effective plans for treatment for emotional, physical, spiritual, mental, and as well as financial instabilities to encounter total well-being. My plans will be for at least one year and are based on the particular disciplines learned from the class.

Physical Disciplines

Physical well-being transcends mere physical health; it is a holistic outcome influenced by our lifestyles and behaviors concerning sleep, diet, physical activity, and relaxation (Physical Well-Being and Health: What It Is and How to Achieve It, n.d.). In this context, I elaborate on my plan to enhance satisfaction in my physical well-being as a crucial component of my one-year plan for overall wellness.

Within the realm of physical disciplines, the main focuses are self-care for physical health and regular exercise. Recognizing the paramount importance of regular exercise, I must acknowledge that, due to social influences, I had neglected physical activities such as football since high school. Previous to this realization, my physical exercise was limited to mobile games. However, a recent experience during a study session served as a reminder of the benefits of exercise when I engaged in physical activities with friends and classmates as a class requirement. Consequently, I am committed to incorporating regular exercise into my routine, progressing from daily to monthly and eventually to a yearly commitment.

On a daily basis, I aim to cultivate healthy habits by waking up around 5 a.m. This early start will allow me to manage my time more effectively throughout the day. The morning routine includes starting the day with a cup of water, followed by a 20-minute walk before taking a morning shower. Subsequently, I will proceed to cleanse myself before preparing breakfast. In the evening, my plan is to reduce screen time and study hours, ensuring an early bedtime. Adjusting my study schedule to the daytime, considering most classes at ATS are in the evening, will facilitate a consistent bedtime of 9:30 p.m.

On a weekly basis, I intend to explore various places in Manila or beyond every weekend for relaxation-perhaps a beach retreat or visiting friends in other cities. Additionally, I plan to participate in a specific church every Sunday to enhance relaxation. This outlines my schedule towards achieving physical well-being.

Financial Disciplines

Managing finances as an international student in the Philippines presents its challenges, but with careful planning and budgeting, it is certainly manageable. Upon arriving in June 2023, ahead of the semester, I recently conducted a financial evaluation for the first semester and was surprised by the discrepancy between my actual spending and my initial expectations. The primary culprit was identified as living costs. During my early days in the Philippines, finding accommodation was a struggle, and I settled for a readily available but expensive option. This realization has prompted the need for better financial management throughout my academic years.

Firstly, I aim to seek a more affordable place to rent, thus reducing my living expenses. Subsequently, I will create a detailed budget that encompasses monthly expenditures such as rent, utilities, transportation, food, and other essentials. Moreover, I plan to allocate a portion of my income for savings and emergencies.

Secondly, I am exploring avenues to cut costs wherever possible. Emphasizing needs over wants, I have learned to avoid unnecessary spending, opting to cook meals at home instead of dining out frequently. Additionally, I intend to leverage student discounts and consider applying for a scholarship from ATS once I complete my 9 units, easing both tuition fees and financial concerns.

Recognizing the uniqueness of everyone's financial situation, I understand the importance of regularly reviewing and adjusting my financial plan as circumstances change.

Plans for Spiritual Disciplines

As for my spiritual discipline plans, inspired by insights gained in class, I have categorized them into three groups: inward disciplines, outward disciplines, and corporate disciplines. Within the realm of inward disciplines, I am focusing on specific practices such as meditation, prayer, fasting, and journaling.

Inward Disciplines

While I am familiar with the positive effects of meditation and have used it to stabilize my mind during emotional challenges, my approach has been non-biblical. Acknowledging this, I am committed to transforming my meditation practice by incorporating the reading of scripture. This shift aims to nurture a

more intimate relationship with God in my daily life, extending beyond times of struggle.

Prayer will play a significant role in my upcoming spiritual development plan. I intend to maintain a practice of praying three times a day in a conducive environment, enabling me to engage in private conversations with God to foster a deeper and more intimate relationship with Him. While my past prayers were predominantly self-focused, my future emphasis will extend to encompass those around me, my country, global leaders, the well-being of our planet, and all individuals within my reach. I have come to recognize the profound importance of prayer.

Regarding fasting and journaling, I am inclined towards absolute fasting, abstaining entirely from both food and liquids for a specific period not exceeding 24 hours. Throughout this fasting period, I will consistently engage in spiritual journaling, documenting reflections on my experiences and emotions. This process aims to provide a more profound understanding of myself and my evolving relationship with God, allowing me to witness His faithfulness over time. In my spiritual journaling plans, I intend to delve into self-reflection, exploring my spiritual needs. These are the strategies I am implementing for my inward spiritual disciplines.

Outward Disciplines

On the other side, I have also developed a more comprehensive plan for my outward disciplines. The spiritual disciplines I have incorporated into my planning include simplicity, solitude, submission, and service.

In terms of simplicity, upon introspection, I've realized that I already exhibit a level of simplicity in my life. This goes beyond mere material desires, as I find satisfaction in a lifestyle that values intentional simplicity—streamlining my

life, minimizing distractions, and focusing on what truly matters. However, I acknowledge the need for better discipline in simplicity to control both material and sexual desires, fostering satisfaction in all aspects of my life, including my long-distance relationship with my wife. This plan aims to cultivate a grateful heart and develop a habit of gratitude by intentionally recognizing and appreciating God's blessings.

Solitude, closely related to meditation, journaling, and prayer plans mentioned earlier, presents a challenge for me as I am not naturally inclined toward introversion. Nevertheless, I understand the necessity of solitude to carve out intentional time alone with God, fostering reflection, silence, and deepening my connection with Him. This involves seeking silent places throughout my day where I can communicate with God, embracing moments of stillness and quiet to listen to His voice. It does not necessarily mean finding a silent room; sometimes, it could be choosing a secluded spot for a solitary walk or finding a quiet chair for personal reflection. These are concrete plans for my journey towards Total Well-Being.

Expectations from the Plans

Christian total well-being represents a holistic approach that integrates various aspects of life, giving priority to spiritual development while also addressing physical, mental, emotional, and relational health. I hold high expectations for this plan, anticipating numerous benefits such as deepening my relationship with God, personal transformation, emotional healing and wholeness, spiritual fulfilment, emotional resilience, physical wellness, mental clarity and peace, and purposeful living.

While acknowledging the potential for unexpected benefits, I have three major expectations from this plan. Firstly, I am eagerly anticipating a deeper

relationship with God. I believe that the planned disciplines, both inward and outward, including prayer, scripture study, fasting, and journaling, will contribute to cultivating a more intimate connection with God. My hope is that these practices will enhance my understanding of God's character, allow me to experience His presence, and foster a sense of closeness to Him.

Secondly, I have a strong expectation for personal transformation. Recognizing the need for a shift from long-standing self-bias, I am conscious of feeling guilty about my spiritual maturity, despite being a seminary student and a leader in church youth ministry. The anxieties and worries about my future physical health, stemming from a lack of exercise, drive my need for practical Christian living to achieve biblical total well-being. I believe the proposed plan aims to shape my character and values in alignment with the teachings of Jesus Christ, making personal transformation a pivotal expectation in this process.

The last and perhaps greatest expectation from this plan is to make a spiritual contribution to those who are suffering from the social and political crises worldwide, particularly in Myanmar. I have come to realize that the needs of the afflicted extend beyond material aid, requiring spiritual encouragement and a continual experience of God's redemptive witness amid their struggles. I recognize the importance of prayers, meditations, and spiritual contributions for them just as providing physical necessities. I am hopeful that through my planned disciplines, I can offer these aids to those in need.

Personal Reflection on Spiritual Formation Class

I love studying the scripture logically and systematically and as a result of this, I chose the theology program since my bachelor student life. I did have a lot of options after my high school. In Myanmar, we have particular standard levels based on results from the final examination of the last year of high school. I

reached a certain level by which I could choose a better major in my university. I used to choose a physics program as a major for my university study. Unfortunately, I did not finish my university because I prefer to study bible rather than secular programs. I moved to a seminary for my bachelor in theology degree and I studied there for four years until I finished. Here my concern is that I still have spiritual problems even though I finished studying theology for four years because I studied a lot logically only for deeper knowledge about theology without any spiritual intention. However, I am so much grateful for having the opportunity to study in the Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) and as well as the opportunity to be here in this spiritual class.

Of course, I have learned a lot from this class and am prompted a lot to re-evaluate myself and recheck how my spiritual journey is going as a minister or youth pastor in my local church who is leading the spirituality of a community. As Jesus said in Luke 6:39 about the danger of a blind man's leading to another blind. I understand this problem but I did not know the right way to encounter spiritual well-being so that I can share this spiritual richness to others. However, I have learned a lot from this class and I am even capable of planning self spiritual well-being disciplines.

Through this spiritual formation class, I have got a better understanding that helps me to find the right steps of disciplines for building a deeper relationship with God. This class also provides me with a structured environment for studying scripture, building personal growth and transformation, and for journaling to total well-being. Additionally, this class encourages me for self-reflection, self-evaluation, and self consciousness to foster personal growth and this can bring positive transformations in my attitudes, behaviors and all my characters into Christlikeness.

The other benefit from this class is the opportunity to learn different meditation and prayer approaches and techniques that can lead me to deeper connection with God as well as meaningful practices. This class gives me chances to engage the community and provides emotional support, encouragement, and as well as gathering with others for the spiritual intentions because it always involves group discussions, communal activities, and shared experiences. This class provides effective guidances to face my life's spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental challenges that I have been struggling to deal with and it brings me to experience the right way to Christian Total Well-Being. Therefore, this course has aided me a lot in my spiritual formation process.

Conclusion

All things considered, as I have already mentioned in my introduction that I was too much influenced through several negative forces that always make steps of barriers or sometimes astray me from the spiritual life or Christlikeness. However, I am really grateful that I have learned the importance of inward spiritual disciplines, outward physical exercises, and corporate disciplines to achieve the christian total well-being. I believe this proposed plan towards total well-being will truly empower me to break down all the barriers between God and me, it will helps me in managing my way of life or life's satisfaction; such as physical health, mental and emotional health, spiritual well being and even in financial handling in the rest of my study in Philippine or the whole rest of my life.